



St. Clair Fire Protection District
470 E. North St. * St. Clair, Mo 63077
636-629-2727 * Fax 636-629-0844
www.scfpd.org

Dedicated to preserve life and property.

Kirby Banderman
President
March 12, 2013

Dave Berkel
Treasurer

Danny Gossett
Secretary

The Honorable E. Richard Webber
United States District Court Judge

Re: United States v. Eric Hinson
Docket No. 4:13CR00010ERW

To Whom it may concern:

In the matter of Eric Hinson having plead guilty to fraud committed against St. Clair Fire Protection District, I wish to comment on behalf of the citizens of the District, The Employees and Volunteers of St. Clair Fire Protection District, and the other elected officials who served with Mr. Hinson.

It is well established by auditors retained by the District, the FBI, and the IRS the massive monetary amounts which were taken by Mr. Hinson and the extensive measures taken to divert and conceal the theft of District funds. But something far more valuable was also taken and that is trust. The citizens of the District have always trusted us to provide fire and rescue services with the funding provided by the taxpayers. That trust has been broken by the actions of Mr. Hinson. Now they will always have doubts as to whether funds are properly used and accounted for.

Both the fulltime employees and the volunteer personnel of the District have been affected by not having available the funds which Mr. Hinson stole. Several of our fulltime crews have had to operate with just 2 personnel per shift with the Duty Officer filling in the third position as needed. If the funds taken by Mr. Hinson had been available, we would possibly have been able to add firefighters to bring the manning up to normal levels (three firefighters per truck) thus both enhancing firefighter safety and the quality of service which we could provide to our citizens.

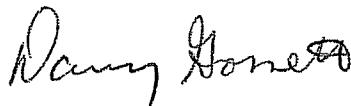
Mr. Hinson, himself, proposed a length of Service Reward Program which would have rewarded long serving volunteers for their years of service to the district. I only wish that Mr. Hinson would have had to be the person to tell the retirees that the program was canceled since, because of his actions we did not have the money to fund it.

The other Directors who served on the Board have also been impacted by having been associated with Mr. Hinson. We trusted that all of the Directors had only the best interest of the District and our Personnel as our ultimate goal. I cannot adequately express the disgust and disappointment that someone who we considered to be one of our own would betray the organization in the manner that he has. His actions have caused doubts about the integrity of the other elected officials and the organization as a whole. That may lead to the worst consequence of all. We can no longer ever completely trust the other elected officials, officers or employees of the District and if we cannot trust those within our organization, how can the public trust in us? No amount of punishment or restitution can ever adequately compensate for that loss.

Sincerely:



Kirby L. Banderman, President
Board of Directors, SCFPD



Danny Gossett, Secretary
Board of Directors, SCFPD



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Secretary

March 31, 2013

Honorable E. Richard Webber
United States District Court Judge

RE: Impact statement concerning Eric R. Hinson

Sir;

The St. Clair Fire Protection District began as the St. Clair Volunteer Fire Dept. about 84 years ago. At that time the only money that the department had to run on was through donations and an annual picnic. There were times through the years that the volunteers actually paid for gas for the equipment to operate as well as to make necessary repairs. In 1974 the taxpayers of the now St. Clair Fire Protection District voted to become a District and they put their trust in three longtime volunteers to run the district. The taxpayers and members of the department have always trusted the board members to do the right thing and provide the best service possible. Due to the deceit and greed of Eric Hinson this trust has been compromised and damaged leaving a difficult road for the district to travel to gain their trust back. Stealing the money from the taxpayers and department is one thing but betraying the trust of so many is the long term affect of this despicable crime. As the District moves forward where equipment and manpower are always the pressing issues for the budget it will be difficult to ask the taxpayers for help to support a cause that has been violated. During the investigation the District has had to upgrade both radios and air packs for the fire department and in both cases we had to enter into lease agreements to pay for them as we didn't have the funds to pay for these necessary purchases. The impact to both Danny Gossett and Kirby Banderman has been devastating as they trusted Eric to lead them and make them better board members but he only took full advantage of their trust and betrayed them as well. Today taxpayers of the district look at the Fire District in a different light and wonder who else could have been part of this whole plot and how can we trust them again.

The Fire Department has also been impacted by the greed of Eric Hinson. The men that serve and protect depend on trust whether it is the trust of their brothers working side by side in life threatening situations or the trust that the District is financially sound to provide for them and their families. The morale of the department has plunged since the investigation started mainly because of all of the unknowns surrounding the investigation.

Firefighters have wondered if there were going to be layoffs or downsizing due to the lack of funds and this has all been due to one person Eric Hinson. Due to the shortage of funds the District has never been able to provide any type of pension for the full time staff nor have they been able to add manpower to make the job safer with at least three man engine crews. Several lives have been impacted due to the decisions that Eric made as he was working his way to the Chiefs position and they have been forever damaged. Any firefighter that thought Eric was a friend can now truly feel the betrayal and the lies that Eric was so good at.

I have been a member of the St. Clair Fire Department for 40 years and I come from a family dedicated to the St. Clair Fire Protection District. My Uncle Bob was the first Treasurer of the Board and when he passed away in 1991 my brother Ed filled his position until 1999. I myself have been impacted by the greed and betrayal of Eric Hinson. First as a fellow firefighter I would have trusted Eric with anything I have as I had to have that kind of trust to possibly put my life on the line working with him. I trusted Eric as a longtime board member of the St. Clair Fire Protection District to always have the best interest of the taxpayers and employees of the district. The only interest that Eric had in the SCFPD was the steady flow of money from the district to fund not only his daily living but also his extravagance. As I mentioned before stealing the money from the District is one thing but the impact of the deceit and betrayal of trust lingers on now and will for years to come. I have served the people of the St. Clair area for many years and yet I still have people question my integrity concerning this crime. From the point of discovery until Eric's indictment I along with the Anna Marie Short and Mike Kelley have spent countless hours trying to piece this whole puzzle together. I feel like the restitution will be plus for the taxpayers but Eric Hinson truly deserves to be placed behind bars because of his actions and greed.

Respectfully Submitted,



David A. Berkel
Board Treasurer
St. Clair Fire Protection District



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Secretary

The Honorable E. Richard Webber
United States District Court Judge,

Re: Impact Statement regarding Eric Hinson

Writing this statement has been very difficult for me. I considered Eric Hinson more of a friend than a boss. As the Office Manager we worked closely on many matters pertaining to the district. When it became clear what he had been doing with district money it angered and sickened me. This very selfish act and presumption of entitlement is beyond my comprehension. I feel extremely betrayed, I trusted Eric more than I should have and now my trust in human nature has been lost. For someone who many put their trust in, to do this, shakes me to the core. A good leader possesses a selflessness to want the best for his employees, working conditions, pay and benefits. As one of those employees, his audacity showed that we meant nothing to him. As a taxpayer it disgusts me and I want to know why he thought he and his family were better than the people keeping him in office, then into a paid Chief's position.

When I was hired at St Clair Fire Protection District in 2004, I was proud to be part of such a great organization. After a devastating family tragedy that our firemen responded to I realized these men were also my family. These selfish acts by Eric Hinson have left us with a divided district and it does not feel like family any more. Decisions he made within the department were to his benefit with no regards to how those decisions affected the employees and day to day operations. It was not uncommon for employees to fear for their jobs, because Eric also controlled that. Until Eric Hinson is made accountable for his actions I am afraid that we will not be able to move on.

In my nine years with the St Clair Fire Protection District, I have typed and read the resolution that swears in a Board of Director, there is a paragraph that a candidate solemnly swears to.

That being, to support the Constitution, demean one's self faithfully in office, to be honest, faithful and perform their duties impartially. The actions taken by Eric Hinson have been the extreme opposite. For a public servant to be given the opportunity to serve and then to act in such a way as living their daily lives extravagantly using tax payer money is a disgrace.

Words cannot express to our tax payers that this is, in no way, shape or form acceptable behavior. With restitution, the district can begin the task of repairing the financial responsibility to the citizens and hopefully regain their trust. I want to enjoy coming to work again and not feel shame for our district because one man chose himself over honoring the resolution he swore to the citizens that he would uphold.

Sincerely,

Anna Marie Short
Office Manager
St. Clair Fire Protection District



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Kirby Banderman
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Dave Berkel
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Danny Gossett
Secretary

April 1, 2013

The Honorable E. Richard Webber,
United States District Court Judge

Reference: Impact letter regarding Eric R. Hinson

Sir:

My name is Jason Hatley, I am a Lieutenant for St. Clair Fire Protection District. I also serve as the shop steward, or "the voice" of the full-time firefighters employed there. I started in November of 1998 at the age of 15, served in our nation's Navy and was hired full-time a year after my service. Just as many of my brothers before me, I have devoted my life to the protection of my Constitution, fellow countrymen, district residents and all who might pass through.

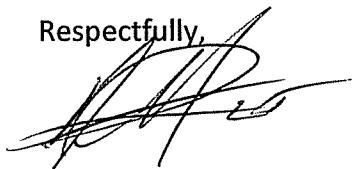
Over the years, I have been honored to serve with some extraordinary people. Some of these men have devoted more time to our fire district than I can only hope to have on this earth. Every one of our firefighters has had to make sacrifices at some point, mostly in the aspect of safety. Funds were cut to programs that offered a little compensation to volunteer personnel to work with our full-time crews. When funding was cut for that program, funds were to be put towards a retirement-type program for the volunteers. Reports showed money going into this account, but in reality, it never existed. This, understandably, upset them and caused many of them to reconsider their devotion of time to our district and reduced responding manpower. This has put physical, mental and emotional strains on all that respond to alarms. A job that normally has 20 or more personnel to work now has sometimes less than 10. Trucks that normally responded with three or more now respond with one or two, if anyone. Everyone is expected to perform at a level at least twice what can be safely performed. Budget shortfalls created a maintenance nightmare. Repairs to equipment had to be pushed back, preventive maintenance was put off or skipped and the district had to hold off on purchases of items such as tires for quite some time. When the vehicles we are driving weigh upwards of 30 tons and travel 70 mph, worn tires can make everyone on board a little nervous. Economic strains have not missed our area. Every year the cost of living and benefits rise and the pay has had to remain the same. Our district leaders have done everything possible to maintain the benefits while catching up on past due expenses.

When an elected official takes their oath and swears to protect the Constitution and to be faithful and honest, I trust them to do just that. This situation has opened my eyes to the fact that even

though you may look up to someone or consider them a friend, you must still question their intentions, especially when they are in complete control.

This has destroyed the name of our great fire district. Since, it first hit the newspapers of our small town; all ranks of men have taken ridicule on duty, off duty, in local shops and restaurants, pretty much anywhere we go in town. We have watched the legacy left to us get dragged through the mud. Our public trust has diminished and some supporters we had before, have now turned against us. While the rumors have slowed and fingers no longer point, we still walk with a limp and a black eye. Eric Hinson has truly knocked us off our feet. I believe justice will be served, and trust the punishment will reflect the crime. While the light at the end of the tunnel is small and distant, we will recover. We will prevail. We are a tough band of brothers that while battered, we will not be broken. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Jason Hatley
Lieutenant, SCFPD



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Danny Gossett
Secretary

March 11, 2013

To: The Honorable E. Richard Webber, United States District Court Judge

Dear Sir:

I have been an active member of the St. Clair Fire Protection District for fifty seven(57) years, starting in 1956 at the age of 17. I have held the positions of Assistant Chief, Chief, and President of the District Board of Directors, serving in that position from the formation of the District in 1974 until 1996. I currently work full time as the District's vehicle maintenance person, and have been in that position for eleven years, since 2002.

When I became a member of the St. Clair Fire Department in 1956 we had two gas powered fire trucks that the volunteers maintained and used to protect the citizens of St. Clair, funded only by donations and fund raisers. The St. Clair Fire Department took over the Lonedell fire department in the early 1960's, because the citizens of the small town of Lonedell could no longer financially support that fire department. Lonedell at that time had a small garage with a dirt floor and one fire truck.

On several occasions, the volunteer firefighters, myself included would pay for repairs and fuel for the fire trucks, out of their own pockets because fire department funds would be very low at the end of each year.

In 1974 the St. Clair Fire Protection District was formed. The Fire District Board of Directors from that point on always managed the District's finances with great care and was able to purchase overtime, state of the art fire trucks, equipment and progressively grow from one station to currently four.

In my close to 60 years of service with the St. Clair Fire Protection District, I have never seen the District in such a state of turmoil because of the selfishness, greed, arrogance, and most of all dishonesty of one man, Eric Hinson. In the past two to three years I have been unable to replace worn, unsafe tires on some of our fire trucks, unable to perform preventive maintenance, oil changes and such on our fire trucks. This was a huge safety issue for our personnel. This fire district in the past has always put vehicle maintenance and repairs as a high priority in the yearly budget and was able to maintain that standard. We owe it to the firefighters who operate the fire apparatus to have well maintained and safe apparatus and equipment. The citizens of the fire district also deserve to have fire trucks and equipment that is in top working order. Eric Hinson was obviously more concerned with his own personal financial gain than the financial wellbeing of the fire district.

I have seen this fire district grow from two stations and three fire trucks ran by all volunteers that would spend every available moment of their time working on the trucks and equipment, to a fire district with four stations, fifteen major pieces of fire apparatus and paid fire fighters along with volunteers. I cannot begin to describe how disheartening and sickening it is to see one person, Mr. Hinson almost financially ruin one of the most well-known and well respected fire districts in the state of Missouri.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dale Sullivan
Dale Sullivan



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To: The Honorable E. Richard Webber, United States District Court Judge.

Sir: The St. Clair Fire Protection District was formed in 1974. Prior to that, the St. Clair Fire Department operated one fire station in St. Clair and one fire station in Lonedell, Mo. The fire department was operated solely on donations and fund raisers. Volunteers at that time were known to pay for fuel and repairs to the apparatus out of their own pockets. After the Fire District was formed, the financial status of the district was better, however, district fire personnel remained dedicated, and honest in the matters of the district and were extremely proud of their accomplishments. The citizens of the fire district were also dedicated and proud of the fire district, along with having a tremendous amount of trust in the fire district. The first Board of Directors appointed in 1974 remained in those positions for decades and were very instrumental in the growth of the fire district by being honest, dedicated, and trust worthy to the district's citizens. The fire district had highly trained personnel, well-built and maintained equipment and facilities.

Mr. Hinson in a matter of approximately six years, because of selfishness, greed, arrogance, dishonesty, and a total disregard for the protection and well-being of our taxpayers, along with the safety of our fire personnel both paid and volunteer, not only placed this solid, well-functioning fire district in a state of financial disarray, he has damaged a very good relationship based on trust, between the fire district and its citizens for whom we work for, protect, and depend upon to financially operate.

In my 30 years of service to the St. Clair Fire Protection District, I cannot recall a time when we were not able to make repairs, purchase essential components such as tires, and batteries for apparatus, or repair equipment carried on the apparatus that could potentially save a life, because the fire district financially was placed in such a serious position. Through the dedication of all district personnel we were able to overcome this initial financial burden. We, the personnel of the fire district, both paid and volunteer are tasked with rebuilding what was once a very well-known and respected fire district. But a far greater task is looming over us, that is to regain the confidence, and trust of the citizens of the St. Clair Fire Protection District, who are hardworking people paying taxes to support us, and who deserve and expect better than what has occurred.

Eric Hinson was elected to the fire district board of directors by the citizens to manage the financial and legal aspects of the fire district because he gave the citizens of this fire district the impression that he had a true passion for the fire district's well-being. He led several people to believe that he was well educated in the matters of this fire district as well as the fire service in general. This man has struck a serious blow to the integrity, and financial wellbeing of the fire district. He has given the fire service a serious black eye, as well as elected officials in every governmental subdivision.

Respectfully submitted,


Craig Sullivan, Deputy Chief

The Honorable E. Richard Weber
United States District Court

Re: The United States vs. Eric Hinson

Your Honor:

My name is Michael Kelley and I am the Interim Chief of the St. Clair Fire Protection District. Until September 2011, I was the Assistant Chief of the District serving under Chief Eric Hinson. I am proud to have served the citizens of St. Clair for the past 26 years. I have known and served alongside Eric Hinson for the entirety of my public safety career in St. Clair. I had considered Eric Hinson a friend. This friendship and trust has cost me and the citizens of St. Clair dearly.

Because of our long standing work history and our past friendship, I have been falsely accused within my place of employment, and within the community, of covering up Mr. Hinson's criminal activity. In the course of trying to hide his criminal activity, Mr. Hinson attempted to attribute criminal activity to me. His actions exposed me and my family to criminal investigation and ongoing public scrutiny and suspicion. The trust and respect I had worked so hard to develop with my staff was destroyed by Mr. Hinson's crimes.

Our business is based on trust. We need the citizens of our Fire Protection District to trust that not only will we be there for them when needed, but that we will also be responsible stewards of their tax dollars. Mr. Hinson's actions have caused dissension within the Fire Protection District, dissension that will take some time to correct. We are embarrassed and we are hurt.

I put my trust in you and our judicial system to hold Mr. Hinson accountable for his actions. The citizens of St. Clair Fire Protection District deserve restitution. Everyone impacted by Mr. Hinson's crime has been paying a price for the past eighteen months and will continue to for some time. I think it only fair that Mr. Hinson should also have to pay a price, which in this case should be confinement. The Fire Protection District, my family and I look forward to closing this chapter of our lives.

Respectfully,



Interim Chief Mike Kelley

3-31-13

To The Honorable E. Richard Webber, United States District Court Judge:

Hi my name is Brad Whitworth. As a kid I always wanted to be a firefighter. I started on the St. Clair Fire Protection District when I was only 14 years old. I worked for them as a volunteer until I was hired full time in 2002 when the district hired a full time crew. I stayed a full time member until 2009. During that year I was put on probation at the firehouse. Eric Hinson brought me and the shop Stewart at the time to his house for a meeting away from the other board members. Come to find out years later, the other board members were unaware of the meeting that took place. Eric told me that if I resigned at that point I would later be able to get my job back that I just needed to complete my fire 1 & 2 and get my financial situation in order. I worked any shift that they offered me just so I could continue to be a part of the fire district and the brotherhood that I had found there. I had also completed my fire 1 & 2 classes. My financial stuff started to get better. So even after three hiring processes I was never given my job back. Instead Eric's son ended up being hired at the fire department. I felt as though I had been misled into resigning so that Eric could get his son a position on the department. This was very difficult for me. It was my dream job and I feel as though Eric killed my dreams. It not was only hard for me but my wife as well. I left her at home more evenings than I normally would had I been working a normal schedule. I missed out on many family events because I took any fill in shift while I was waiting to get my job back. I left abandoned by the department since I had done everything Eric asked of me. Then to find out he was not only sneaky about the meeting he held with me but stealing all the money from the department. He took away the district's ability to hire more full time members and that option to pay others for part time or weekend work. With the cutting out of the part time, the district suffered because many men were not able to work their normal jobs and also be at the fire department for free even though it's what they love to do. I am furious that this man has caused so many problems for me and my wife. But also for the district and town of St. Clair as well. He should spend a long time in jail and by long time I really hope and pray that it is longer than 10 years. He has betrayed all of his friends, family, co-workers, and citizens of this town we live in. He needs to be used as an example. You should not be able to steal \$700,000 and only go to jail for 3 years that is just a tiny slap on the hand. A few years ago I stopped working the crazy shifts at the fire department. I went to work for my wife's family business, but in the back of my mind I am still waiting for my job back. I occasionally run fire calls and do fill in shifts. I hope that this letter gives you a little glimpse into the effects that his actions had on my family and others.

Thank you,

Brad M. Whitworth

March 28, 2013

The Honorable E. Richard Webber
United States District Court Judge

Dear Judge Webber,

Prior to moving out of St. Clair Fire Protection District in 2007, I was a long time member. I joined in 1970, prior to becoming a fire protection district. We had a very tough time with the rising costs for equipment, maintenance and facilities. It was heartening the support we got to form a tax supported district in 1973. The vote was 280 for and 47 against. From that point, we always maintained a good financial position and complied with all laws regarding being good stewards of that money and more importantly, trust. The last year before we received tax monies, our budget was \$12,000, from donations and the annual Fireman's Picnic.

I served as the second Treasurer of the District from 1991 until 1999. During that time we were able to pay off the 1980 bond issue that allowed us to build two new and modern fire stations to replace old and very small fire stations. We paid off those bonds a year early. We were very proud that we were able to do so and save the tax payers money.

Eric replaced me as Treasurer in 1999. I was quite saddened to hear about the financial improprieties that transpired during his tenure. When I learned that he even back dated some of the expenses to a time when I was Treasurer I was very angry. My family has a long history of service to the St. Clair community and the fire service. Our financial management of our neighbor's tax money was very important. The first Treasurer was Robert Berkel, my Uncle, who I replaced upon his untimely passing. We always had annual financial audits that had no management notes. Audits were given to all Board members and others that requested them, with no redaction or removals.

Sincerely,



Edwin M. Berkel

Honorable E. Richard Webber

United States District Court Judge

RE: Impact statement concerning Eric R. Hinson

Sir;

My name is Larry Lawrence; I am and have been a member of the St. Clair Fire Protection District since July of 1965, nearing the 50 year mark. When I started we had very little equipment and no money. What we did have was Dedication, Trust and Honor! We survived on an annual picnic in June and letters seeking donations that went out in November and we always operated in the red just before the picnic and again in November. At times each member paid for fuel and or parts to keep the equipment running out of pocket. Still the things that we always had were Dedication, Trust and Honor! We became a tax supported district in 1973 and the last year of our picnic our approximate income was \$12,000. In 1974 we are now a tax supported district and we could start making improvements one of which was to pave the dirt floor in our #2 engine house. The original board of directors took no pay for years while trying to build up the funds for the district, again Dedication, Trust and Honor. The St. Clair Fire District has a large area to cover some 240 square miles.

We are very proud of our District and to have this happen is absolutely devastating. We have done without important maintenance issues. One example was that our maintenance man recommended tires on our tanker and was told we had no money available, I guess Eric must have needed it more than us trying to protect not only the taxpayers of the district but our own personnel in an emergency. That said our current revenue has to be used all the more wisely as there is no fund balances for emergency use.

You're Honor even after this devastating blow our District still remains to be one of the best fire districts in our Great County. The Dedication, Trust and Honor have been impacted in the eyes of the public. Besides the St. Clair Fire Protection District the Fire Service in general has been impacted by this crime due to trust issues and the handling of tax money.

Your Honor, we still have dedication but it will take us time to recover the trust and honor from our people and the community again. The restitution will be a lifesaver for the District but Eric truly deserves to be behind bars for his crimes.

Thank you for your time,

Larry E. Lawrence
135 West Springfield
St. Clair, MO 63077

23 March, 2013

To: The Honorable E. Richard Webber, United States District Court Judge

Re: Case of Eric Hinson

From: Nolan Sanders, St. Clair fire Protection District

Your Honor,

I have served as a member in different capacities with the St. Clair Fire Protection District for close to 44 years. My interest and association with this organization from a young age inspired me to go into the fire service as a profession.

I grew up in St. Clair and as a young boy, I remember watching activities at the firehouse and meeting the men of the St. Clair Volunteer Fire Department. They were men that served with honor, integrity, and dedication to the community. They were my heroes and I wanted to be like them. I couldn't wait to turn 14 years old so that I could join as junior member.

The St. Clair Volunteer Fire Department received its funding through solicitation of donations and an annual picnic. Some of the local organizations would help to buy equipment when they could. Most of the men would buy their own protective clothing if they could or they would use "hand me down" stuff that came from other fire departments. There was team effort to make sure that equipment was ready for service and we took pride in the fact we gave our best and we had "good standing" in the community since the departments start in 1917.

In 1974, the citizens approved the formation of the St. Clair Fire Protection District and the first 3 man Board of Directors. The district formation provided for a stable funding base through tax support which provided for better services to the community. The first elected board consisted of 3 long time members of the fire department who took pride in the service and were honest, dedicated, and had integrity towards the task they took on. They were reelected several times and ran the district very well. Budgets were strictly followed and no financial problems were encountered, equipment that was needed was obtained, and services were provided to the best of everyone's ability. The fire district had the trust of its citizens and the board had its citizen's interests at heart.

As with any publicly elected board, trust and confidence is given by the citizens to take care of the financial, operational, and legal matters of that organization. It is required that each member of that board work not only as a team but also as an individual to check and balance each other to maintain the honesty and integrity of that board. In this case, there was a failure.

Trust was placed in Eric Hinson by citizens of the district, his fellow board members, and employees and members of the fire district that he served. As treasurer of the board, he was expected to provide honest information in the matters of funds and funding for operations of the district as well as provide for proper and accurate accounting of those funds. He was also entrusted to provide direction for matters concerning the district. That trust was violated through deceit, deception, lies, and stealing by someone who was self serving and cared not what problems would arise or the outcome would be.

As a result, the district has suffered from financial shortfalls, manning cutbacks, equipment purchase delays, added interest expenses as well as morale decline, mistrust, and ill feelings. It is hard to say exactly what the long term effects will be if issues have to go to the citizens for approval, but I would guess that they wouldn't be favorable for a while. All that has been achieved in the past through hard work, dedication, honesty, and integrity was flushed down the toilet when details of this crime came to the public. To the long term members of this organization, I can say that it was like getting punched in the gut and having the breath knocked out of you.

Not only did this have an effect on the St. Clair Fire Protection District, but because of being a career firefighter and the position that Eric held where he was employed, it is a black eye to the fire service as a whole. His actions could have a larger impact than what we may be aware of.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this situation.

Respectfully,



Nolan Sanders
St. Clair Fire Protection District

Dear Honorable E.Richard Webber

United States District Court Judge

Refrence US VS Eric Hinson

I would like to take this opportunity to explain some of the effects of Eric Hinson's lies and money extortion he did while stealing money from St. Clair Fire Protection District.

First there are the effects on the district—

This issue has had a devastating effect on the St Clair Fire Protection District in many ways. First, we lost the trust we had built up between the citizens and the fire district. The district has always had the support from the community, as we had a reputation of strong financial decision making. During this "misuse" of the funds, the district has had to take loans out from the bank for necessary remodels and upgrades to vital equipment including air packs and radios. If we had the money that Eric took and used for his personal pleasures, we (the district) would have been able to purchase these items without taking out loans from the bank. Our emergency fund has been depleted, and is now at a zero balance. If we had to replace a pump or an engine for one of our trucks, we would not have the money to pay for the repairs without taking out another loan. With no extra money for equipment, repairs, etc, this could easily be a life threatening issue with the safety of firefighters and the people we serve.

Effects on the members of the department-

Eric's actions have caused a tremendous shift in morale and trust within the members of the department. Again, this department has always had close relations between its members; we are a family, many of which are second and third generation fire fighters. The department had worked to start a type of retirement fund for the volunteer firefighters (we are a combination paid and volunteer department). Some of the monies Eric took were to be used to establish this fund for the volunteers. That money is now gone, no retirement fund for the volunteer firefighters. When someone you have known for years and have worked with does what Eric has done, it hurts you personally also.

Last, but far from least, are the effects of his actions on myself.

I have been on the department for 40 years. I was the District Chief during part of the time Eric was stealing this money from the department. At the time, I was watching the budget as I know the history of the department and I felt that we did not have the money to be spending what we were spending, and I started asking if we could really be affording some of the purchases, and Eric informed me that I didn't know anything about budgets, and that basically I didn't know what I was talking about. This was in the fall of 2010. At the 12/15/10 board meeting, Eric stated that he had received complaints about

me from area contractors, and that I had two choices, be demoted or be fired. When I asked about the complaints, Eric would not give details. I went home that night as a firefighter, no longer being the Chief or an officer. In hindsight, I feel he wanted me out as I was questioning financials of the department, and by demoting me I wouldn't have access to financials and he could continue covering up his actions, using the district money to pay his expenses. While Eric was misusing/taking money for his trips, etc, I had to take a \$24,000.00 a year cut in pay. This caused a financial and emotional strain on me and my family. I now am working two jobs to make ends meet, we have sold a vehicle and property, to help offset the loss in pay, and I withdrew money from my retirement to pay off some bills.

What Eric did is a tragedy to the District, Department and the people of St. Clair, and he deserves no less than the maximum time allowed for sentencing.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reading this.

Sincerely



Tim Wideman

Firefighter/Former Fire Chief

St. Clair Fire Protection District